



Costa Mesa Fire Department

Kaitlyn's Law: Unattended Child in Motor Vehicle Act

Never Leave A Child Alone In A Car

- Between 1996 and 2002, more than 175 children died of hyperthermia after being trapped in a motor vehicle. At least 19 have died in the United States already this year.
- Children age 3 and under accounted for more than 90% of these deaths.
- Most cases involved children left in cars by parents or other adults, but one-third were the result of children crawling into unlocked parked cars.



Kaitlyn's Law

In the fall of 2001 the Governor of California signed into law Senate Bill 255, also known as *Kaitlyn's Law*. Named for Kaitlyn Russell, a six-month old who died after being left alone in a parked car for more than two hours, the law makes it illegal for a child to be left unattended in a motor vehicle.

California Vehicle Code 15620

(a) A parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for a child who is **6 years of age or younger** may not leave that child inside a motor vehicle without being subject to the **supervision of a person who is 12 years of age or older, under either of the following circumstances:**

(1) Where there are conditions that present a significant risk to the child's health or safety.

(2) When the vehicle's engine is running or the vehicle's keys are in the ignition, or both.

(b) A violation of subdivision (a) is an infraction punishable by a fine of one hundred dollars (\$100).

(c) Nothing in this section shall preclude prosecution under both this section and Section 192 of the Penal Code, or Section 273a of that code, or any other provision of law.

(d) (1) Subdivision (b) and Section 40000.1 do not apply if an unattended child is injured or medical services are rendered on that child because of a violation described in subdivision (a).

(2) Nothing in this subdivision precludes prosecution under any other provision of law.

In accordance with Kaitlyn's Law, 70% of the proceeds from fines are used for the development and implementation of community education programs on the dangers of leaving children unattended in motor vehicles.



- On a warm day, the temperature inside a parked car can reach as high as **140°** in as little as two hours.
- A young child's body temperature will rise three to five times faster than an adult's will, resulting in serious injury or death.

Resource Information

National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration
1-888-327-4236
www.nhtsa.dot.gov

National SAFE KIDS
Campaign
(202) 662-0600
www.safekids.org

4 R Kids Sake
(951) 278-1820
www.4rkidssake.org

Orange County Fire
Authority
(714) 573-6200
www.ocfa.org

Not Even For A Minute...

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign work throughout the year to remind parents and childcare providers of the dangers of leaving children unattended in motor vehicles.

"During warm weather, temperatures can rapidly rise inside a vehicle, even if it's parked in the shade," said NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D. "A tragedy can occur within minutes if children are left in a closed car."

Dangers to children left unattended in cars include:

- **Heat stroke (hyperthermia);**
- **Carbon monoxide poisoning;**
- **Runaway vehicles;**
- **Carjacking;**
- **Child abduction;**
- **Trunk entrapment;**
- **Self-release from car seat;**
- **Emotional trauma.**

What To Do

NHTSA and SAFE KIDS recommend following these safety rules to avoid heat-related injuries or other vehicle dangers:

1. Never leave a child alone in or around a vehicle.
2. Check to make sure all children leave the vehicle when you reach your destination, particularly when loading and unloading. Don't overlook sleeping infants.
3. Place a reminder of your child's presence where you'll be sure to see it before leaving the vehicle (diaper bag next to your briefcase, baby blanket under your lunch, etc.)
4. Never leave a child in a vehicle with the motor running or the key in the ignition.
5. Keep car keys away from children at all times.
6. Always lock your car, even at home, and remind your friends and neighbors to do the same.
7. Teach children not to play in, on or around cars.
8. Keep rear fold-down seats closed to help prevent children from getting into the trunk from inside the car.